



Bringing Home a Second Baby – 2: Welcome!

EXTENSION

December 2020

Laura Hubbs-Tait

Regents Professor, Human Development and Family Sciences

Ashley Kimble

Assistant Professor, Human Development and Family Sciences

Chelsea George

Graduate Student, Human Development and Family Sciences

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Welcoming home a new baby is a wonderful time for all family members and friends to celebrate. This fact sheet offers suggestions for two-parent and other families. In some families, mom and grandparents welcome a new baby. In other families, birth parents may welcome the baby with partners, adoptive parents, godparents, friends, or others. This fact sheet offers suggestions to help all brothers and sisters in all families welcome a new baby.

Tips for Meeting New Baby in Hospital

- Arrange to have new baby in bassinet or in newborn nursery when older child visits so that mother's arms are open for older child.
- Make sure mother gives hugs and kisses to older child before holding baby.
- Have partner or other family members introduce older child to baby.

More Tips for Meeting Baby

On the next page are things for parents to do and say to help brothers and sisters welcome a new baby.

Research

A loving relationship (secure attachment) with parents is important to sibling relationships. Secure attachment to mother is related to less sibling aggression to the new baby. Confident fathers have children who show lower aggression to the new baby (Volling, 2017). Children with very involved fathers also show less separation anxiety after a new baby joins the family (Volling, Steinberg, & Kuo, 2020). These important findings emphasize the importance of parents' loving, responsive care for young children. Further, they suggest educational programs focused on such care may help children adjust to the birth of a new baby.



Books to read with older children about younger siblings

- Church, Caroline Jayne (2015). *I am a big sister.* . New York: Cartwheel Books.
- Church, Caroline Jayne (2015). *I am a big brother.* New York: Cartwheel Books.
- Fuller, Rachel. (2009). *My new baby.* Child's Play International.
- Keats, Ezra Jack. (1967). *Peter's chair.* New York: Harper & Row (Viking).
- Penn, Audrey. (2006). *A pocket full of kisses.* Indianapolis: Tanglewood.

References

- American Academy of Pediatrics (2019). How to prepare your older children for a new baby. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/prenatal/Pages/Preparing-Your-Family-for-a-New-Baby.aspx>
- American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (2017). Planned home birth. Committee Opinion No. 697. *Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 129, e117-e122.

Dunn, J., Kendrick, C., & MacNamee, R. (1981). The reaction of first-born children to the birth of a sibling: Mothers' reports. *Child Psychology & Psychiatry & Allied Disciplines*, 22, 1-18

Hoffman, K., Cooper, G., Powell, B., Benton, C. M., & Siegel, D. J. (2017). *Raising a secure child: How Circle of Security parenting can help you nurture your child's attachment, emotional resilience, and freedom to explore*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Steinberg, L. (2004). *The ten basic principles of good parenting*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Volling, B. L. (2017). XI. General discussion: Children's adjustment and adaptation following the birth of a sibling. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 82, 142–158.

Volling B.L., Steinberg E.J., Kuo P.X. (2020) Is It easier the second time around? Fathers' roles across the transition from one child to two. In Fitzgerald H.E., von Klitzing K., Cabrera N.J., Scarano de Mendonça J., Skjøthaug T. (eds) *Handbook of Fathers and Child Development*, pp. 245-265. Springer, Cham.

What to Do	What to Say
When baby is delivered in hospital*	
Arrange to have new baby in newborn nursery when older child visits, so they can help the other parent bring baby to mom.	“Thank you for bringing [baby’s name] to me! What was he/she doing when you went to the nursery? What did you do?”
At home	
When mom and baby return, have other parent or grandparent carry baby so mom’s arms are free to hug older child.	“I am so glad to be home with you! Would you like to help grandma put [baby’s name] in their crib?”
Feed new baby on couch so there is room for older child too (and grandparents or others).	“Would you like to feed your doll baby while I feed [baby’s name]?”
Plan activities with special people (dad, grandparents, friends, sitters).	“Do you know what you get to do today? You and Daddy get to go to the park to play with Sammy!”
Plan one-on-one activities for older child while new baby is sleeping or being fed by someone else.	“I am so glad that I get to read with you. Would you like to read <i>Brown Bear, Brown Bear or Giraffes Can’t Dance?</i> ”
Let people bring toys and food or help.	Say, “yes” when people offer to help!

*Some families prefer out-of-hospital births. See American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (2017) for recommendations for positive outcomes.

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This publication is printed and issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Vice President for Agricultural Programs and has been prepared and distributed at a cost of 20 cents per copy. 12/2020 GH.